

# Pilgrimage to a Memory Hole: Towards an Affective Study of Fan Tourism in Asia via Angkor Wat and Wong Kar-wai's *In the Mood for Love*

Wikanda Promkhuntong

This paper extends existing conversations on “fan tourism” in East and Southeast Asia from the focus on economic advantages and impacts of blockbuster movies to the making of a ritualized space and affective experiences of audiences identified as fans/cinephiles. Using the case study of fan pilgrimage to Angkor Wat featured in the final sequence of Wong Kar-wai's *In the Mood for Love* (2000), the paper draws attention to the formation of iconic and cinephilic location through various textual engagements. The paper explores the way ritualized moments featured in these writings relate to a tradition in cinephilia, which favours moments when things gain agency in the film. Drawing on contribution of works in fan studies, the paper further points to the way in which fans turn the iconic space and cinephilic moments into their own “places of the imagination” (Reijnders, 2011, 8) through re-enactment. The paper concludes by reflecting on the total experience of pilgrimage as a meaningful journey by discussing fans/cinephiles' own ethical and social reflections.

Keywords: fan tourism, cinephile pilgrimage, affect, *In the Mood for Love*, Wong Kar-wai

## **From the Economy of Fan Tourism to Cinephile Pilgrimage -**

This paper positions fan tourism as “a pilgrimage” to highlight affective and ritualized dimensions of fan/cinephile travel to film locations; the position had been much less explored in comparison to the domains of economic/ industrial growth and social impacts.<sup>1</sup> Particularly in the context of Asia, conversations on fan tourism in the last decade<sup>2</sup> constantly alluded to recent phenomenon described by films such as *Lost in Thailand* (2012), *East Pray Love* (2010), and *The Beach* (2000). The commercial success of *Lost in Thailand* in China resulted in large-scale influx of new tour groups to filming locations in Chiang Mai and other parts of Thailand.<sup>3</sup> Numerous case studies from the fields of Tourism Management and Business were conducted to explore the phenomenon. Under the scope of “film tourism” or “film-induced tourism,” case studies focused on the motivations of tourists for visiting Thailand, the implications to the tourism industry, and the

industry's impact on local communities (cf. Mostafanezhad & Promburom, 2018; Phomsiri, 2015; Sangkakorn, 2013).<sup>4</sup>

Scholars in the fields of Heritage Studies and Human Geography approached fan tourism in Southeast Asia via Hollywood movies shot in the region.<sup>5</sup> Case studies on *The Beach* strongly complicate the romanticized colonial view of the tropical landscape with debates on environmental issues, sustainable developments, and conflicts with local stakeholders (Cohen, 2005; Winter, 2006). The economic, political, and environmental directions in these works provided critical responses to the state-driven interest in promoting existing natural and cultural attractions as film locations. Nevertheless, the focus on tourism dominated aspects of the content of the film, and fan engagement with film location, which were the basis of fan tourism in the first place. Reflecting on the current trends in fan tourism studies, Sine Heitman (2010) remarked that future sustainable development in fan tourism should take into account diverse stakeholders, and engage with debates in film and media studies.

This paper employed the notion of pilgrimage linked to existing work on “fan pilgrimage,” “media tourism,” and “cult geography” in media and fan studies (Hills, 2002; Reijnders, 2011; Toy, 2017), and “cinophile pilgrimage” in cinephilia and film studies (Cunningham, 2008). Exploring conceptual terms from these two fields, I discuss different elements of the experience of those writing about Angkor Wat in relation to Wong Kar-wai's movie and those who write about the movie along with their experiences of visiting the actual site. J. Caroline Toy's (2017) paper highlights how the term “pilgrimage” allows closer examination into the aspect of ritualized space, which is important to fan's visit to film location (p. 252). This particular area has been less explored due to positioning of fan practice as secular and subversive instead of cultish and affective, and other various reasons. The work of Matt Hills (2002) used the term “cult geography” to productively explore the way in which cultish engagement with film location cannot be separated from real-world presence and self-reflections. Another reason for limited use of the term is partly because pilgrimage is too closely associated with established religion. Toy (2017) paved the way for the discussion of the ritualized aspect of fan pilgrimage by connecting pilgrimage and fandom using Thomas A. Tweed's theorization of religion as “a cross-cultural flow” (p. 256) across different geographies. Toy saw the fannish space as an “eddy” where multiple discursive and affective elements of fan practice entangle underneath the surface (p. 256), while maintaining the relation to ritual and extraordinariness, and reducing the degree of institution and orthodoxy. Through this lens, the attention to the connection between actual location and fictional media content by fan studies scholars was expanded to multiple

things being at play at the pilgrimage site, all of which add to the affective and ritualized meaning of a place. The notion of pilgrimage also fit Angkor Wat due to its existing status as a seminal religious monument of the Khmer Empire. The somatic/cinephilic encounter and fan re-enactment, and different forms of self-reflective writings are both crucial to associating Angkor Wat with Wong Kar-wai.

### **Textual Construction of a Pilgrimage Site**

For film fans/cinephiles who follow Wong Kar-wai's works, many would have encountered materials that draw on film locations to highlight the director's preoccupations with Southeast Asia and travelling. These various textual engagements highlight a unique characteristic of film text that takes the writers/audiences away from what is happening in the film, to the director's body of work: histories outside the film or past activities happened at the same location. The affectiveness of these sequences invite audiences to write, which can be considered in relation to Roger C. Aden's (1999) "symbolic pilgrimage" or the way cinema has the ability to take audiences somewhere (albeit symbolically) outside their respective viewing locales. While Aden describes symbolic pilgrimage in relation to the virtual experience of a place in a fictional world while watching a movie, this paper extends the idea to the process of writing as a mode of affective engagement with the film location and, in many cases, subsequent visits to the place. The materials discussed in this section are nowhere near inclusive, yet they provide examples of a textual practice that distinguishes a place, and elevates its status as a site of memory amongst fans.

In academia, the majority of works on Wong Kar-wai and other East Asian auteurs are from scholars in area studies, cultural studies, and related fields. These works shed light on the way select films open discussion on geopolitics of the people and places that are otherwise underexplored by more mainstream movies. Lai Chee Kien's (2015) chapter—part of Routledge's edited volume *Asian Cinema and the Use of Space* by Lilian Chee and Edna Lim—examines how Wong's movies re-imagine past regional connections on-and off-screen between Hong Kong and Southeast Asia. Kien discusses how the characters and narratives in three of Wong Kar-wai's key films—*Days of Being Wild* (1990), *In the Mood for Love* (2000), and *2046* (2004)—illustrate how the director connects present day Hong Kong with past relations between the Chinese diaspora and the Nanyang, or what is now known as Southeast Asia. Shots of plantations, tropical trees, and everyday scenery are examined as remnants of the bygone vision of the Nanyang as experienced by Chinese migrants from Hong Kong who travelled for work, and to visit families in the areas around the South China Sea (Kien, 2015).

Tropical fruits unique to Southeast Asia featured in the deleted scenes of *In the Mood for Love* and the emphasis on canned pineapple in *Chungking Express* are included as examples of the way the metaphors of regional connections can be experienced through the sense of taste. Kien also extends the discussion of space and travel associated with the film medium to other transmedia connections that Wong referred to in his films, including: print publications, literary networks, and transnational music (p. 117). In the case of writings by academics such as Kien, the act of symbolic pilgrimage is revealed through the selection of specific scenes with a strong emphasis on locations (often places that the writer/academic has close ties with) that lend themselves to extended analysis by offering historical contexts or critical reflections. While the convention of academic writing does not leave room for personal affection, commemorative or critical work add cultural values to the film and contribute to turning the film location into an iconic, representational, and desirable space for subsequent pilgrimage visits.

The ability of Wong's films to trigger discussions on global cinephilic connections and symbolic travel can be illustrated further through Intellect's World Film Location series (Solomons, n.d.). A still from Wong's *Chungking Express* was selected as the cover of the book about Hong Kong film locations, and in promotional materials of the series. In a special film catalogue titled *Film: Why Does Film Matter?* featuring snippets and quotes from various books published by Intellect, another still from *In the Mood for Love* was printed on a spread. A quote by the series' editor of World Film Location, Gabriel Solomons is featured on the page describing the power of film "to connect us to a world outside of our own, even if the only travelling we do is from our sofa" (Solomons, n.d., p. 28-29). Articulating symbolic pilgrimage par excellence, Solomons's quote contributes to the recognition by a UK press that Wong Kar-wai's movies offer viewers a sight of the world different from what they see in everyday life.

Contributing to the iconicity of a specific location closely related to the director were writings that discussed the treatment of film locations as part of the director's auteurist traits. Carla Marcantonio's (2010) account in *Senses of Cinema*, described Angkor Wat featured at the end of *In the Mood for Love* as a reflection of the theme explored in Wong's overall body of work. This theme is "the juxtaposition between the permanence of film and the impermanence of what Wong [sic] photographs" (para. 4). In order for the character Chow Mowan (played by Tony Leung) to resolve his unrequited love and longing, he takes the opportunity during his visit to Cambodia to whisper his own secret into a hole on the temple wall, following a myth mentioned earlier in the film. Marcantonio describes various frames after the protagonist exits the scene, leaving the camera to capture the temple

at dusk. Through shots of locations, “Angkor Wat becomes a character in the film’ that holds the protagonist’s secret and ‘withstands [sic] the test of time” (para. 2). This impactful description of the representation of space adds an extra layer of meaning to Angkor Wat, one that highlights Wong’s creative use of space to conclude the movie.

Another work on Wong’s aesthetic style by Gary Bettinson (2015) continues to add value to this final sequence. As part of Bettinson’s wider argument on Wong’s poetic filmmaking through the aesthetics of disturbance, Angkor Wat in the final sequence of *In the Mood for Love* is a contradicting site that reverses audience expectation of a melodrama. While the grandeur of the temple suggests a final resolution and emotional outburst typical to Hong Kong genre films, audiences are instead prevented from emotional fulfilment as the love remains unrequited and the secret whispered into the temple wall is muted. Although Angkor Wat has already been featured in different films, these writers suggest that it is being represented differently by Wong Kar-wai. Marcantonio (2010) and Bettinson’s (2015) discussions of space as part of the director’s aesthetic traits here invite further reflections on film authorship in relation to space. Through these academic paratexts, a specific hole on the wall of Angkor Wat has gradually become a special place in Wong’s narrative universe.

Behind-the-scene stories and director’s interviews published during or after the release of the film such as Camhi’s (2001) article in *The New York Times* and the book written by Rayns (2015) further affirm the director’s connection with the film location. This kind of work also produces a sense of intimacy through the director’s physical involvement with specific places, and adds a layer of production history to the location. In the account on the making of *In the Mood for Love*, Tony Rayns (2015) discusses the practical motif behind the decision to shoot at Angkor Wat, and the scenes cut from the final version of the film. Rayns notes that the Thai production manager came up with the location. Through this connection, the crew was able to get a permission to shoot in 48 hours at Angkor Wat (2015, p. 47-48). Wong’s collaboration with the Thai crew complimented Kien’s writing on past cross-border trades and off-screen collaboration between Hong Kong and Southeast Asia. *In the Mood for Love* was shot in Hong Kong, Thailand, and Cambodia, and illustrated the increased collaboration in the film production and post-production in the region from the 1990s onwards. Among fans of the director, this background story also reaffirms Wong’s characteristics as a filmmaker who makes spontaneous decisions and uses circumstances surrounding his works to formulate his aesthetics.

In the age of multiplatform media sites, film crews and fans also use media channels to discuss personal connections with film locations, which

contribute to their cultification. The video *In the Mood for Love - Final Sequence* was uploaded by thisisnotanimage77 in 2008 and has 283,792 views as of April 2019. A viewer AngkorPisey (2012) inquired on the appearance of Maggie Cheung with Tony Leung at Angkor Wat, to which another user Arturo Sierra (2012) noted that they did not meet in the film. Referring to Kathlessnharbin, AngkorPisey (2012) subsequently explained that the scene was part of the special DVD collection he received. The user thisisnotanimage77 (2008) who posted this final sequence also made a comment in the video description that *In the Mood for Love* final sequence was inspired by *Roman Holiday* (1953). While there is no evidence that the two films are connected, fans of both films recognize the similarities between whispering into a hole in a wall in Angkor Wat, and the sequence in *Roman Holiday* (Wyler, 1953) when Princess Ann (Audrey Hepburn) put her hand into the iconic Mouth of Truth (Bocca della Verita) to prove her honesty. Both locations are associated with respective myths established in the films and behind-the-scene stories before becoming fan pilgrimage sites. In the case of Wong's Angkor Wat, the secret in relation to the making of the film endures through the release of photos "shot around the year 2000" by a costume production assistant for Wong Kar-wai, which describes specific location shooting as "most iconic and enigmatic scenes" (Mohmoud Abd Elghany, 2019). Captured by a film camera and circulated online, these artistic and intimate close-ups in warm sepia hues reveal the director at work in his Hawaiian shirt and iconic sunglasses, with the two main stars of the films hanging out. Taken from a personal collection, these materials further constituted to the cultification of Wong Kar-wai and Angkor Wat.

Reflecting on the way the appreciation of moments in cinema is learned rather than innate (Willemen, 1994, p. 127), the connections among movies and audiences with shared knowledge on iconic film locations highlight the way transnational cinephile culture is fostered by the network of textual citations and collective cinematic memories. In relation to the cultification of a film location, Matt Hills (2002) noted that privileging a specific location is usually connected to spaces which "have already been identified within the fan culture as particularly characteristic of the original text" (p. 149). In order to participate in the story, to uncover myths, to reach out to the art of the director, and to get closer to the characters and stars, fans are encouraged to visit actual tourist locations. This process, explored in the next section, adds affective dimension and personal layers of meaning to the location.

## Cinephilic Affective Encounter with an Actual Film Location

A key element provided by records from fans who have travelled to the film location is the emotional/affective relationship to the pilgrimage site. More communal and personalized platform such as a group website or a blog function as a public yet private domain allowing fans to write in more colloquial and subjective ways. Stories of love and desire experienced by characters from Wong's films are re-told and interpreted with circumstances fans encountered at the actual location. Fan stories reveal the gradual process of affective and ritualized encounter between a fan and the object of interest.

In *Numéro Cinq*, a magazine that positions itself as a webzine for literary types and artists started by a small group of friends of the Canadian writer Douglas Glover, RW Gray (2015) contributed various articles about Wong's films, including a piece about Angkor Wat. Gray began an account of his visit to Angkor Wat by presenting the theme of "secrets," which he sees as the key motif that runs through *In the Mood for Love*, especially in the conclusive part of the film. The video of the final sequence uploaded on YouTube by Semektet (2007) is posted at the top of the article. The article highlights the way in which the journey to Angkor Wat represents a search for "unrequited desire" (Gray, 2015, para. 2) Highlighting how the story of the search can stretch across time and space, and permeate several films, Gray (2015) quotes the voiceover from *2046*, a "pseudo sequel" to *In the Mood for Love*: "I once fell in love with someone. After a while, she wasn't there. I went to 2046. I thought she might be waiting for me there" (para. 2). These interconnected moments inspired Gray to search for Mr. Chow.

Once arrived, the intimate connection with the film is triggered by the sound of a bird. Gray (2015) recalls his film memories, which begin with "the monk and the temple wall ... in silence and then the birds' calls" (para. 2) This recollection brings back moments of watching the film "in several movie theatres, on my couch at home, a film sound I had heard and disregarded on many viewings and even listened to ad nauseam on my iPod via the soundtrack" (para. 12). The "blaringly real" and "oddly dissonant" sound (para. 12) bridges Gray's experience of the film and the actual location, and shaped his experience of Angkor Wat as a kind of symbolic and actual fan pilgrimage. Although he did not find Mr. Chow, Gray experienced through sound "the shock of art and life feeling too close together" (para. 12). When Gray found the hole in the wall with the help of the tour guide, the sound enhanced his sacralized experience of the location; Gray described how he "stare[s] at the wall, then look[ed] around, a bit speechless, the guide watching on in his quiet way, the way he has watched through the whole tour, like he agrees speechless reverence is appropriate" (para. 13).

Previous discussion of the state of tourism as a modern and playful ritual, and as a substitute to modern day religion noted by Victor Turner (as cited by Cohen, 1985) points to the way travel allows individuals to engage in the “situations of *communitas*” (p. 291). Turner’s concept as expanded by Erik Cohen refers to these situations as the “antistructural situations” or the shift between “normal, structured, mundane states and their dissolution into extraordinary liminal during the travel, which allow for different level of personal changes” (p. 291). Liminality in the context of fan pilgrimage to Angkor Wat is a kind of somatic and transcendental experience. It is the state of being in intimate proximity with the object of adoration whereby the sense of self connects with other realms of memory and imagination.

Gray’s (2015) experience of communion or the “situations of *communitas*,” resonates with writings on cinephile pilgrimage, which have sought to come to terms with the ability of cinema to capture minute details that trigger our memories of the past (either past viewing of the movie or personal memories evoked by objects in that film). Since viewers cannot watch a movie at the film location (although many fans including Gray brought printed film stills, images on their phones, or their laptops to play the movie), fans search for a specific “portal” at the film location—such as the sound or the hole in the wall—to reach the imaginative level, and to create what Douglas Cunningham (2008) referred to, drawing on the work of Siegfried Kracauer, as “psychophysical correspondences” or the “fluid interrelations between the physical world and the psychological dimension” (p. 123). In this way, the real destination is not only the actual location but also the spiritual one. To have found the exact location is to find that portal and to reach a kind of cinephilic *jouissance* or to experience bodily sensation associated with film material.

The context of cinephilia privileges cinema that experiments with film form to enlarge life beyond what can be seen or experienced in day-to-day life, and to provide a revelation or an epiphany. This fascination is rooted in the early interest of cinephiles in the ability of cinema to enigmatically present “a familiar object or event or locale” that brings about “a certain otherness about the content [in which] the image’s material seems to be revealed in a fresh way” (Willemsen, 1994, p. 124). Arguably, this focus takes us back to the ontological and aesthetic roots of auteur cinema, in which the fascination with a film moment and location is traced back to the director’s unique way of pushing the limits of the film medium. Hence, it is not uncommon in writings about visits to Angkor Wat by Wong’s fans to link film aesthetics associated with the director with the writer/cinephile’s own experiences. It is also common for cinephiles to state explicitly that their journeys and writings were affectively inspired by Wong’s movies. Apart



from Gray's article "Wong Kar-wai's Secrets, or My Sense of an Ending," Vicky's (2011) article on the top five things to do in Siem Reap begins with the statement: "my journey to Siem Reap was inspired by Wong Kar-wai's movie *In the Mood for Love*" (para. 1). Another video of the trip to Angkor Wat by RyanFungChannel (2009) adds a tribute in the title called "Ryan's Angkor Wat Homage to Wong Kar-wai's *In the Mood for Love*."

Forms of fan engagement with the realms of memory and imagination have also been explored outside the context of cinephilia and auteur cinema. Expanding from the notion of *lieux de mémoire* by Pierre Nora, Stijn Reijnders (2011) proposes the idea of "places of the imagination" (p. 8) to emphasise the importance of memory and imagination in making a place meaningful for media fans. Engaging with both cinephile and media studies, I am of the opinion that works in the two areas can offer productive ways of thinking about the notion of pilgrimage. The following section combines works in these two fields to explore the practice of re-enactment in which cinephiles/fans turn the public/auteurist location into their own performative space for self-exploration.

### **The Self, Re-enactment and Ontological Reflections**

Apart from moments of encounter and the stage of liminality discussed in the previous section, affective investments come with a certain degree of performativity and reflection.

Gray's (2015) account of his journey to Angkor Wat reveals the way the writer himself imagined being in the same situation as Chow Mo-wan; Gray reenacts the scene by attempting to recall his own secrets. Gray engages in a self-reflective process by pondering how he "come[s] from a long line of blabbermouths" (para. 17) and a secret is often shared. As for memories of unrequited love, Gray sees this as the plight of people in their mid 20s and 30s, and maintains he is at a different stage in his life. Gray then continues to analyze the secret whispering as the paradox of the film that the relationship between Chow and his neighbour, Mrs. Chan (played by Maggie Cheung), is not so much a secret love, since audiences know about it, despite not knowing what Chow whispers in the wall. What is unrequited is viewer's desire for the cinematic world.

Gray's (2015) reflection fits with the trope of ontological reflection in cinephile writings, which emerges from the attention paid to the nature of film medium. The moment of revelation upon encountering the actual location, and the moment of loss create cinephilic *joissance*. The notion of loss relates to the material condition of film, which records live actions that cannot happen again. What audiences see is the past. Grounded in the history of cinema, this loss and longing are referred to in cinephile studies

as the notion of necrophilia, or loving the past or the dead object “alive in memory” (Willemen, 1994, p. 227). Any moment of falling in love with the film is a moment of lost love and nostalgic longing because audiences see a memory that can never happen again. Fans can attempt to engage with the moment of revelation, yet something is always lost; we cannot fully inhabit the mediated photographic/cinematic world. While the desire to be one with cinema is unfulfilled, the gap between the cinema and reality allows fans to insert themselves and their own agencies during re-enactment.

The sense of self for Gray as a person at a particular age whose upbringing shaped his life experience with little secrets can also open a discussion on fan/cinephile’s interest in a particular film/director/location as part of one’s life experience. A psychoanalytically-derived view of fan affective experience discussed by Hills (2002)—who drew on and expanded from the work of Donald Woods Winnicott—can offer some reflection on the shift between internal relationship with a cinematic text, and film location and external engagement with the world and one’s own sense of self.

Drawing on the notion of “transitional object” in Winnicott’s work, Hills (2002) described the concept as an object (imagining an object in which a child plays with) which

opens and occupies a “third area” in the child’s experience, belonging neither in the realm of inner or outer reality but being instead a “resting place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated”..

It is through the transitional object that the child recognises the existence of a world outside him- or –herself. By taking on this role, the child’s transitional object opens up a space between internal and external which “religion and art” will later come to occupy (p. 104).

While, Winnicott’s (as cited by Hills, 2002) notion of transitional object focuses on the sense of self during childhood, the way in which life experience shapes adult affective play requires an extension of the concept, which Hills proposed as the secondary transitional object. Through this notion, fans’ experience during the pilgrimage can be discussed through the affective flow of cinematic memories as well as the ability of fans to “extend and redefine according to the objects which are encountered socially and historically” [sic] (Hills 2002, p. 109). Through the notion of secondary transitional object, Gray’s narrative of the self as part of a family that always shares secrets with each other, and the self as established through the affective relationship with the film about secrets, can be illuminated.

In another case of fan/cinephile's encounter with a film location, the process of self-reflection focuses more on fans' playful negotiation with the object of fandom. Entitled *homage to Wong Kar-wai's In the Mood for Love* a YouTube creator called Ryan (2009) created a video to capture his walk into Angkor Wat with friends and various parts of the temple from daytime until dusk, and his re-enactment of Chow whispering the secret into the wall. Despite the attempt to shoot the final sequence in the same way as in the movie through shots of the temple, the re-enactment and the silhouette of palm trees, it is obvious that the video is a rudimentary record of a personal trip. Ryan remarks in the video description that

[T]he entire time at Angkor Wat, I looked for the hole featured in 'In the Mood for Love' However, I don't think I found the right one. It just made me realize how fabricated the whole scene was. Each shot was probably taken at different parts of Angkor Wat. Maybe Tony Leung wasn't really whispering into a hole. (para. 1)

Through the process of filmmaking, Ryan (2009) does something different from others: he demystifies the mechanical construction of the iconic sequence. At the same time, he also attempts to edit the video as close to the final sequence as possible. Shared on the social media platform, the homage features the soundtrack from the movie composed by Michel Galasso. The length of the video is the same as the actual final sequence and Ryan's own re-enactment appears at the same moment as in the actual film. With available technical tools, Ryan was able to compensate the limitation of the visual and his lack of a cinephilic encounter with the film location with the use of sound. The technique of using pre-existing soundtracks to create continuity between different times and spaces also resonate with Wong's movies.

Ryan's (2009) example reveals close connections between cinephilic and fannish practices in the age of digital media as discussed by Thomas Elsaesser (2005). Extending from the notion of loss and unfulfillment associated with the early generation of cinephilia, which Elsaesser referred to as "cinephilia take one" (p. 37), there is a process of fulfilling this loss with the aid of various transmedia tools that highlights the importance of digital technology and media platforms in contemporary cinephilia and fandom. Elsaesser describes "cinephilia take two" (p. 35) as the way new generations of fans/cinephiles adopt the playback technology, DVD remastering, and ownership of movies to both compensate for time restrictions, and to express love to cinema. While cinephilia take one is associated with the ontology of the film medium and the auteur, take two embraces the role of

cinephiles as prosumers that actively engage with fannish activities, such as producing their own movies in response to the film (Elsaesser, 2005). Through his public channel, Ryan (2009) also published many other videos that revealed his interest in travelling and filmmaking. Other visits include a trip to Hong Kong's Central to Mid-Level escalator featured in *Chungking Express*, and his visit to the Bridge on the River Kwai amongst other videos of concerts and comic-cons. Ryan's participation here offers an interesting account of the way fans/cinephiles engage with their many objects of interest by drawing on available resources, cultural knowledge, and personal skills and creativities.

Returning to the metaphor of “an eddy” by Toy (2017), cinophile/fan pilgrimage can bring about many layers of personal and ontological meanings of a place, which may or may not oppose each other. Toy draws on Nick Couldry's work to highlight at least three possible encounters: “fictional, production, and ordinary” (Couldry as cited in Toy, 2017, p. 254). Apart from the engagement with “fictional” space of the film and “ordinary” place of the location, Ryan adds the layer of cinematic ‘production’ and personal reflection into Wong Kar-wai's filmmaking. Toy's assertion that “fan pilgrimage places” or “fannish spaces” are “co-constructed and ritualized sites of interpretation that emphasize the agency and emotional attachments of fans” (p. 252) is highly relevant. In a place such as Angkor Wat, in which different meanings can be placed at different parts of the temple, the last section uses the metaphor of a “memory hole” to discuss fan's broader contextualization of their pilgrimage.

### **Tickets, Tour Guides and Tomb Raider: Fan Tourism and Related Experiences**

Though I started this paper with a divergence from socio-political and economic aspects of fan tourism related to large-scale blockbusters, this section will highlight how fans of Wong Kar-wai inevitably engage with these aspects in their encounters with film locations. Extending from Toy's (2017) metaphor of an eddy, I opt for the term “memory hole” to highlight things that get discarded in dominant discourses on the location that are picked up by fans. Featured in Orwell's *1984* (1949), memory hole is the place where materials that are altered or censored for the benefit of those in power are discarded into. The metaphor of a memory hole, treated as a place with power politics of affective and discursive construction, can shed light on fans' journey into ethical engagement with the landscape, and the grand scheme of history.<sup>6</sup>

Published in *Philstar*, a Philippine online portal featuring news, sports, lifestyle, and entertainment content, Tanya T. Lara contributed to the

channel with her own journey to Angkor Wat. Lara (2012) gives a synopsis of the film to contextualize the myth surrounding the final sequence before remarking on other fans who tried and failed to find this specific location. Lara ascribed other fans' failure to find the location to the film's relative niche appeal: though critically acclaimed, the film is not as well-known as *Tomb Raider*, and Angkor Wat is massive. Lara continued with her personal story of contacting a long-distance friend whom she would like to meet at Angkor Wat to "promise her that she would find this temple column [sic]" (para. 5). Without success, Lara's account subsequently turns into a story about layers of memories that the site endures, and the politics of power between dominant and marginal types of cinema that influence the experience of the pilgrimage. The location of "Lara Croft Temple or Ta Prohm" was the subject of discussion between Lara and the tour guide Darith, who has not seen the movie but knows the exact location when tourists ask for information. Through the discussion with Darith, Lara wrote about the Killing Fields where "almost a third of Cambodia's population were killed" under Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge extremist regime in the 1970s (para. 24). The discussion prompted the guide to talk about his own childhood: "hearing a bomb going off or people disappearing, or knowing somebody who knew somebody who had stepped on a landmine" (para. 27). The conversation continues on to the present day transformation of the site into a tourist location, which now hosts the Red Piano bar "giving away for free the 10<sup>th</sup> cocktail you order... a tradition *Tomb Raider* star Angelina Jolie started" [sic] (para. 30). Though not able to find the hole in the wall, Lara's experience of the trip was presented as a total experience of Angkor Wat and Cambodia, with its different representations and memories. The idea of affective pilgrimage as an immersive encounter with a specific portal of memory, which Lara could not find, is replaced with intimacy with others' memories and experiences.

A similar kind of total experience is discussed by Berlinda Lin (2017) in her personal blog. Her account in Chinese and English discusses how Angkor Wat has been on her mind since watching Wong Kar-wai's *In the Mood for Love*. In addition to the textual engagement with the film, Lin discusses layers of histories associated with the Khmer Empire, the Khmer Rouge (with a reference to the award-winning film *The Killing Fields*) as well as a reflection on the country's economy led by farming and tourism (para. 3-4). In the process of finding the hole in the wall and taking a video record of the fan tour, Ryan (2009) also captured things that caught his interest: a horse, other tourists, and dancers in traditional costumes. The observation of the space and everyday life at the film location include different workers and agents involved in making a tourist attraction. For one thing, these

accounts challenge the perception of fan tourism as a fantasy disconnected from real world politics of film locations. These additional stories, viewed through the metaphor of a memory hole, highlight how fan/cinephile's self-reflective writings can include stories that may exist in the margin of dominant discourse on fan/cinephile. What makes fan/cinephile pilgrimage stands out then is the process of opening the self to connections with others, and to possibilities of creating meaningful experiences.

Within the circuit of film culture, the mediatisation of transitory moment related to a specific film and director can turn into an archival material that add "endurance" to the source text has been observed by Barbara Klinger (2011, p. 210). Significantly, this aspect also points to an important nature of contemporary fan tourism/cinephile pilgrimage as part of transmedia participatory cultures. One audience who wrote for a blog entitled "Baklay" decided to travel overseas for the first time to celebrate her birthday by visiting the site in search for the hole in the wall (Klaris, 2014). The intensive research that goes into working out the exact location by reading blogs, news articles, and YouTube comments, and the excitement of making this a dream trip was discussed. Although the fan discovered that she was too short to reenact the sequence, she provided a map, and a photographic account of how to find the hole in the wall for other fans. Circulated online, these works add new content to the universe of texts associated with the director and film location, and subsequently help sustain the iconic status of the pilgrimage site.

In the context of film market and tourism industry, the "Baklay" (2014) blog reveals a form of fan labour that sustains the field of global auteur culture. Economic impact in relation to fan tourism here may not appear in large-scale tour groups, or contribute significantly to the increase of gross domestic product, but the long-lasting material surrounding a film director and film locations coexist with the economy of tours of better-known films.

Additional observations can be made as regards to Wong Kar-wai and the economic and cultural currencies of film locations. Within Thailand, Nawapol Thamrongrattanarit's (2010) pocket book *Instant Hong Kong/Hong Kong Kueng Sum Ret Roob* and its paratexts are among a number of products that stimulate Wong Kar-wai-related fan tourism. The book traces the journey of the Thai writer/filmmaker's visit to obscure film locations in Hong Kong from Wong Kar-wai's films, along with recommendations for alternative venues, including art galleries and restaurants. Thamrongrattanarit promoted the book by producing a trailer: he used the recognisable soundtrack from Wong's film ("California Dreaming" featured in *Chungking Express*). With music-video editing style, Thamrongrattanarit matched scenes from the film with pages from the book that featured the

exact same locations. *Instant Hong Kong* was a hit. It is now out of print and has since become a collectible item as Thamrongrattanarit emerged as a cult director in his own right. His Hong Kong journey and snippets of the book have been shared online and inspired a series of visits to the film locations by mutual fans of Wong Kar-wai and other Thai directors.

The site of Angkor Wat in connection to Wong Kar-wai is used by artist Chunlayanon Siriphol in the final part of *Forget Me Not* (2017)—an intermedia adaptation of the Thai romance novel *Behind the Painting* (1937). Chunlayanon's metamorphosis into the character Noppon—a man searching for his bourgeois lover during different eras in Thai history, and at various locations, including Angkor Wat—can be seen as homage to Wong Kar-wai, and his cinephilic conception of Angkor Wat as a site of impossible love. Fan videos, blogs, and articles discussed throughout this article have become auteur paratexts to create a kind of auteurist homage, and provide alternative promotional materials for fan tourism, particularly for films without funding from major studios.

The persistent interest in Wong Kar-wai through material culture inspired by and produced long after *Chungking Express* and *In the Mood for Love* were released highlights the lasting impact of the phenomenon of East Asian auteurs for fan tourism. Auteur-driven fan tourism is sustained not only by fans/cinephiles who travel to film locations, but also by entrepreneurs who offer products and services that connect the sights, sounds, and locations associated with the director and with audiences' lifestyles. In a book series *Museyon Guides* (Ishii, 2008), film destinations are grouped across various countries and continents. In the volume on Asia, Oceania, and Africa, Wong Kar-wai's movie is discussed alongside *Tomb Raider* (2001) and *The Killing Fields* (1984) as part of the writer's low-cost backpacking trip through Cambodia and Thailand (2008). Targeting a different group of audiences are high-end restaurants in Bangkok, which create a Wong Kar-wai experience to attract cosmopolitan fans of the director. Recurring names include "In the Mood for Love: Sushi Bar & Bistro" at Ekamai, "Maggie Choo's Bar" at Novotel Fenix Silom and "Ba Hao" restaurant in Charoenkrung. Located in more expensive parts of Bangkok, these imagined pilgrimage sites offer orient-inspired atmosphere that are often described by critics as "Wong Kar-wai-esque" (Kittisrikangwan, 2017; Sanguankiattichai, 2015). When taking into account multiple forms of engagement with film locations by fans/cinephiles in the globalized and transmedia era, the possibilities of affective and ethical fan tourism viewed through the lens of a pilgrimage and fan works are multi-faceted, and well beyond the case of state-driven destination marketing.

## References

- Aden, R. C. (1999). *Popular stories and promised lands: Fan cultures and symbolic pilgrimages*. Alabama: Alabama University Press.
- AngkorPisey. (2012). *Re: In the Mood for Love - Final Sequence* [Video file]. Retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgO\\_sCXrK4s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgO_sCXrK4s)
- Baklay. (2014, September 18). *In the Mood for Angkor Wat* [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://baklay.wordpress.com/2014/09/18/in-the-mood-for-angkor-wat/>
- Bettinson, G. (2015). *The sensuous cinema of Wong Kar-Wai: Film poetics and the aesthetic of disturbance*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Camhi, L. (2001, January 28). FILM; Setting his tale of love found in a city long lost. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2001/01/28/movies/film-setting-his-tale-of-love-found-in-a-city-long-lost.html>
- Cohen, E. (1985). Tourism as play. *Religion*, 15, 291-304.
- Cohen, E. (2005). The beach of 'The Beach'—the politics of environmental damage in Thailand. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 30, 1-17.
- Cunningham, D. (2008). It's all there, it's no dream': Vertigo and the redemptive pleasures of the cinephilic pilgrimage. *Screen*, 49, 123-141.
- Elsaesser, T. (2005). Cinephilia or the uses of disenchantment. In Marijke de Valck and Malte Hagener (Eds.), *Cinephilia: Movies, love and memory* (pp. 27-43). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Heitmann, S. (2010). Film tourism planning and development – questioning the role of stakeholders and sustainability. *Tourism and Hospitality Planning & Development*, 7, 31-46.
- Gray, R.W. (2015, June). Numéro Cinq at the movies | Wong Kar Wai's secrets, or my sense of an ending. *Numerocinq*. Retrieved from <http://numerocinqmagazine.com/2015/06/19/numero-cinq-at-the-movies-wong-kar-wais-secrets-or-my-sense-of-an-ending-r-w-gray/>
- Hills, M. (2002). *Fan cultures*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Ishii, A. (2008). *Film+travel*. New York: Museyon, Inc.
- Kien, L. C. (2015). Imagining Nanyang: Hong Kong and Southeast Asia in Wong Kar-wai movies. In Lilian Chee and Edna Lim (Eds.), *Asian cinema and the use of space: Interdisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 109-125). New York; London: Routledge.
- Kittisrikangwan, L. (2017, April 12). This hidden Charoenkrung guesthouse gives us serious Bangkok home envy. *SGMagazine*. Retrieved from <https://sgmagazine.com/travel/news/hidden-charoenkrung-guesthouse-ba-hao>
- Klinger, B. (2011). Re-enactment: Fans performing movie scenes from the stage to YouTube. In P. Grainge (Ed.), *Ephemeral media: Transitory screen culture from television to YouTube* (pp. 195-213). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lara, T. T. (2012, January 12) The light of Angkor Wat. *philstar global*. Retrieved from <http://www.philstar.com/travel-and-tourism/769764/light-angkor-wat>
- Lin, B. (2017, November 13). 吳哥窟·人生之旅 Angkor Wat – Journey of my life [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://www.belindalin.cc/2017/11/13/853/>
- Marcantonio, C. (2010) *In the Mood for Love, senses of cinema*. Retrieved from <http://sensesofcinema.com/2010/cteq/in-the-mood-for-love/>



- Mohmoud Abd Elghany. (2019, February 7) *In The Mood For Love* [Facebook post]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=2215997465324920&set=a.2215995635325103&type=3&theater>
- Mostafanezhad, M. & Promburom, T. (2018). "Lost in Thailand": The popular geopolitics of film-induced tourism in Northern Thailand. *Social & Cultural Geography* 19(1), 1-21.
- Orwell, G. (1949). *1984*. London: Secker and Warburg.
- Phomsiri, S. (2015). Film tourism and destination marketing: Case studies of in-bound and out-bound in Thailand. *Review of Integrative Business and Economics Research*, 4(3), 241-249.
- Rayns, T. (2015). *In the Mood for Love*. London: BFI Film Institute.
- Reijnders, S. (2011). *Places of the imagination: Media, tourism, culture*. Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing.
- RyanFungChannel. (2009) *Ryan's Angkor Wat homage to Wong Kar Wai's In the Mood for Love* [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=svZ51WYXkhY>
- Sangkakorn, K. (2013). Modern Chinese tourists behavior in Chiang Mai after the movie "Lost In Thailand". *The Second Sino-Thai Strategic Research Seminar*, Xiamen China.
- Sanguankiattichai, N. (2015) 5 of Bangkok's best restaurants for salapao. *BK*. Retrieved from <https://bk.asia-city.com/restaurants/news/best-restaurants-bangkok-salapao-chinese-steamed-buns>
- Semektet. (2007) *In the Mood for Love - Angkor Wat Finale* [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWbUEB60F4I>
- Siriphol, C. (2017) *Forget Me Not*. [Visual Art and Film] Retrieved from <http://www.chulayarnnon.com/film24.html>.
- Solomons, G. (n.d.). *Film: Why does film matter?* Bristol: Intellect.
- Thamrongrattanarit, N. (2010). *Instant Hong Kong/Hong Kong keung-sum-red-roub*. Bangkok: A Book.
- Thisisnotanimage77. (2008) *In the Mood for Love - Final Sequence* [Video file]. Retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgO\\_sCXrK4s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgO_sCXrK4s)
- Toy, J. C. (2017) Constructing the fannish place: Ritual and sacred space in a *Sherlock* fan pilgrimage. *Journal of Fandom Studies*, 5(3), 251-266.
- Vickygoes. (2011, February 14) Top five things to do in Siem Reap [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://www.vickygoes.com/2011/02/top-five-things-to-do-in-siem-reap/>
- Willemsen, P. (1994). *Looks and frictions: Essays in cultural studies and film theory*. Bloomington; London: Indiana University Press and BFI Publishing.
- Winter, T. (2006). When ancient "glory" meets modern "tragedy": Angkor and the Khmer Rouge in contemporary tourism. In L. C. P. Ollier and T. Winter (Eds.), *Expressions of Cambodia: The politics of tradition, identity and change* (pp. 37-53). London: Routledge.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to the anonymous reviewer who suggested that I foreground the aspect of affect further which helps shape a clearer positioning of the paper.

<sup>2</sup> The report by the Thai Ministry of Tourism and Sport in December 2014 highlights the increase of Chinese tourists from two millions to four millions people from 2013 to 2014 (see: [https://www.m-society.go.th/article\\_attach/13188/17327.pdf](https://www.m-society.go.th/article_attach/13188/17327.pdf)). Within Chiang Mai, local news reported on the number

of Chinese tourists from 40,000 people per year in 2011 to 480,000 people in 2014 (see: [http://www.prachachat.net/news\\_detail.php?newsid=1426480889](http://www.prachachat.net/news_detail.php?newsid=1426480889)).

<sup>3</sup> Based on information from Thailand's Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, the tourism industry gains 712.5 billions in the first quarter of 2017. One of the fastest growing categories is fan tourism. (See more: [http://www.nesdb.go.th/ewt\\_news.php?nid=6670&filename=index](http://www.nesdb.go.th/ewt_news.php?nid=6670&filename=index))

<sup>4</sup> This area of research resonates with the perception on fan tourism in relation to pop culture tourism from Southeast to Northeast Asia, especially South Korea and Japan after the breakthrough of imported films and TV-series such as *Jewel in the Palace* and *Winter Sonata*. See more: Kim, S. (2012). A cross-cultural study of on-site film tourism experiences among Chinese, Japanese, Taiwanese and Thai visitors to the Daejanggeum Theme Park, South Korea. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 15(8), 759-776.

<sup>5</sup> Thailand (as well as other Asian countries) has been a place for cinephilic pilgrimage for many years. Notable film-inspired tourism include the *Bridge on the River Kwai* inspired by the film of the same name in 1957; the James Bond island boat tour that has been popularised after the release of *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1974); and trips to Maya bay following the production of *The Beach* (2000).

<sup>6</sup> It is also possible to further explore fan demographics and their preoccupation with Angkor Wat in relation to notion of Asia, the global flow of tourist to Asia, diasporic travel, nostalgia, and colonial past, which are not featured in fan writings I collected for this paper.

## Acknowledgement:

Sincerely thank you to all who shared the stories of their trips to Angkor Wat that make this paper possible. The work is supported by Thailand's Research Fund and Office of Higher Education (OHEC)'s grant (MRG6180231) and the Multicultural ASEAN Center Project (MU-MAC) (grant no. 1/2018), Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University. The exploration of fan tourism/cinephile pilgrimage in the context of Thailand and Southeast Asia is also part of the British Academy Newton Mobility scheme. I am grateful for the anonymous reviewers for their suggestions, to Patrick Campos, Antonio Sison amongst others who share their interests in my endeavour in cinephile pilgrimage.

**WIKANDA PROMKHUNTONG** is a lecturer in Film and Cultural Studies at the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Thailand. She has completed her PhD in Film Studies at Aberystwyth University. Her thesis focuses on the global success of East Asian auteurs including Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Kim Ki-duk and Wong Kar-wai. Her previous writings in relation to auteur, cinephiles and star persona appeared in *Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies*, Routledge's *Journal of Celebrity Studies* and the Palgrave's Handbook of Asian Cinema. (corresponding author: [wikanda.pro@mahidol.edu](mailto:wikanda.pro@mahidol.edu))